

**Remarks at a Banquet Dinner in Dublin, Ireland**

*April 13, 2023*

Please—[*applause*—thank you very much. Please, please sit down. My colleagues with me know me, and they're never going to let me forget this.

First of all, what I haven't done yet and I'm going to ask—I won't take all the time to introduce everyone, but I'd like to ask all the Members and former Members of the Congress and the—from previous administrations who are here as part of our delegation to please stand up and let everybody see—all of you. Chris, stand up.

They're the reason why even if I didn't believe what I believed, I'd have to believe what I believe. [*Laughter*] Because they're all strong, strong, strong supporters of Ireland and peace and security in Europe.

Folks, one of the people here today who is—does not hold an office now was—came in his mother's womb when John Kennedy was speaking here. John Kennedy's wife could not make the trip, Mrs. Kennedy. And so he did what I would do: He invited his sister to accompany him, as my sister is with me.

And his sister was an incredible woman, but so was the young man that she bore: Mark Shriver. Where are you, Mark? I want you to stand up, and stay there. When Mark—when President Kennedy addressed the Dáil—I don't know whether Mark remembers the speech or not, but—[*laughter*—if he does, I'm really worried.

But you know, I mention this because if it weren't for his father Sargent Shriver, I would not be standing here. In 1972, I was a young man, not old enough to be sworn in as a Senator, running for the Senate, making me the second youngest man ever elected to the Senate.

And his dad was finishing up the campaign, and he was the Vice-Presidential candidate. And he was finishing up the campaign. He was all the way up in Massachusetts. And I asked if he could come to a major event we had and we'd close out every election in my little State of Delaware. It's the single biggest event.

And he came. He came. And he lied like hell about me. [*Laughter*] He said wonderful things about me and what future I would be part of. And I won by an overwhelming margin of 3,200 votes statewide.

But I just want to acknowledge that, and I want to thank his father, who was a wonderful man who's passed away. But, at any rate, Mark, as my dad would say, you've got good blood, kid. You've got good blood.

And growing up, my—we called him "Grandpa"—my Grandpa Finnegan used to say: "If you're lucky enough to be Irish, you're lucky enough." [*Laughter*] That was his expression. Sound—surrounded by all of you in this homeland of my great-great grandmother and grandfather, I feel very lucky. And I really do.

You know, Taoiseach, I want to thank you with the 100,000 welcomes you've given me. And I want to get one of your predecessors in real trouble. The predecessor was—when I was Vice President, there was a guy who was the Taoiseach who's over—two tables over there: Enda Kenny. And we had a—[*applause*].

And I would have a breakfast every—as Vice President, I'd have a breakfast every St. Patrick's Day for those who were the leading Irishmen in the United States Congress as well as a couple of the prelates who were around who were big supporters and the Taoiseach.

And Enda came over. I—we did that eight times, I think, while I was there. The sixth time that I had him over—and then I'd walk them over to the White House to meet with the President. And we'd sit with the President.

And so I'm sitting where the Vice President sits and the President is where he sits—Obama. And Enda looks at the President and says: "For God's sake, Barack. Let the boy go home." [Laughter] "You keep sending him to Iraq and Afghanistan. Well, let him go home." And Barack turned around and said: "Well, go the hell home. Go home." [Laughter]

Well, anyway, I want to thank you, pal. [Laughter] Thank you for doing that. And I appreciate it. That was my first legal way to actually come as a sitting Vice President.

And you know, I want to thank the—Lord Mayor Caroline Conroy tonight, and I bring a hundred thousand welcomes—I'm not going to attempt to say it in Gaelic—[laughter]—for— from every corner of the United States, because every corner of the United States is loaded with Irishmen who would be delighted to be here.

Proud Americans who also count themselves as sons of yours, daughters of yours, cousins, brothers, sisters, grandparents, parents, they really take great pride in their association with Ireland—and quite a few who wish they were lucky enough to be Irish as well.

And the fact is that I also want to thank Marie Heaney for being here tonight and attending this evening as well. It is special to have her with me tonight. Where are you, Marie? Thank you.

One of my great regrets: Your husband was making a presentation at one of the universities here, and I was asked to come and introduce him. And I couldn't because we were voting. And I really regret that. I really regret that.

And—but I've had a lifelong love for Irish poets and words made famous by Yeats, like, "In dreams began responsibility." We have a lot of dreams. We have a lot of dreams.

I've never—I've been doing this a long time. I've never been more optimistic about the future of both our countries than I am today. I mean it: Never in my entire life have I ever been more optimistic.

And you know, as your husband would have said, "Believe that further shore is reachable from here." I believe the further shore is reachable from here. I honest to God do.

I've been doing this a long time. You know—you know, "Our words have the power to make history," Boland said. Well, so many more who—if you think about it, every time I think of trying to define—people will sometimes ask me, "What's so special"—and I'm not being facetious—"Why—what's different about the Irish?"

And I—we're all—we're like every other human being in the world. We have our faults, all of us, whether it's in America or here. But you know, there is this sense—there's a sense that there's nothing, ultimately, we can't overcome.

We've been through the Troubles. We've been through the Troubles personally and in terms of politically. But there was a sense that if you just stay at it, we can get it done. There's nothing that can, ultimately, defeat us.

You know, the one poem I found a few years ago, while going through the old boxes of my—when my mom—our mom passed away. I didn't have the heart to—she—the last several years, thank God, was able to live with me. And all of my siblings got together, and we built a

place just outside the house. And my mom—it was part of the house, but my mom didn't want to live in the house because all—we always had a relative living in the house—our small house. And she said, "I'm never going to be a burden." She was no burden; she was a blessing.

But the point is that—you know, the fact was that going through the old boxes that I—I found a hundred and, I think, fourteen poems written by my great-grandfather—our great-grand—excuse me, for Valerie—our great-grandfather, Edward Blewitt Finnegan.

And he was a—he moved—he came here with his parents back in—at the time of the famine. And he was—became a well-educated man. He got a degree from Lafayette College. And he had four sons; they all got degrees there as well. And he became a mining engineer and—raised in Scranton, but the heart that he had was molded by his father and his grandfather.

And those poems he wrote were always all about his Ireland. And in 1925, which was—he was—he died shortly after that. In 1925, one of the later poems he wrote was called "The Workers." He said: "No barrier is too thick or strong to stay their onward March each day. The goal they seek, the goal they find, hardship to them is but real play."

You know, for—countries like ours and our people have always marched forward——

*[At this point, the President cleared his throat.]*

Excuse me—toward better futures: one of greater liberty and one, which is a word—I've said this many times to all of you—a word I hear more among Irish at home and Irish that are here—the word "dignity." The word "dignity" seems to be used by the Irish more than any other word. I may be wrong about that.

But you know, it's always a march toward a better future—one of greater liberty, greater dignity, of greater equality and opportunity and possibility for everybody—possibility for anybody—everybody.

Our mother used to say: "Joey, remember, no one in the world is better than you, but everyone's your equal. Everyone's your equal." She meant it.

I used to stutter badly when I was a child. And it's something—if you know anybody who stuttered, it's a very debilitating thing. If I told you that I used to talk—ta—ta—ta—to talk like that, people will smile. But if I told you I had a clubfoot when I was kid that was fixed, no one would laugh about it.

And so one of the things that—she'd look at me and say: "Joey, remember. Remember who you are." Like, "You're a Biden." Like, you know, what the hell is a Biden? You know what I mean? I'm like—like I'm a—you know, anyway. And she said, "You can do anything," and was just constantly telling me that I could do anything and believed in everything that I could do. And she made me believe.

But I find that in most of the families that know—the Irish families, that they just decide that they're not going to be put down by anybody at any time, even the barriers seem too thick or too strong.

And you know, think about the history of your country. Whether it's when the—we faced famine, hardship, division, sorrow. But together, you've always prevailed. A lot of pain in between, a lot of loss, but always prevailed. Together, we've worked to become more peaceful, more equal, more diverse, more unified, and, I think, more hopeful.

And so, today, wherever there's a yearning for freedom, a struggle for change, a cry for justice, people around the world know they can count on Ireland. They can count on Ireland. And I believe they can count on the United States, with notable exceptions once in a while.

You know, it's not just for hope, but for help—to help them meet their own needs and to help them march onward; for the hand of friendship, a common commitment to human dignity.

Our countries remember well the cost of war and, most importantly, the profits of peace. And especially, as we mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreements this week, above all, we remember the vital and ceaseless work of strengthening democracy to deliver progress for our people everywhere.

A good friend is here as well, I think. Gary Hart is here, Senator Hart. Are you here, Gary? Gary, thank you. Gary was part of—[applause].

And I just want to say that—you know, I'll end by this: I think we really do stand at an inflection point. I've used that phrase several times in talks I've had here. But the decisions we make now are going to determine what the next three or four decades are going to look like. They're going to lay down the path that we're going to follow. It's happened every five, six generations throughout history. Things are changing.

We have an opportunity to make things better or lay back and let events determine what we're going to do. And folks, tonight, sitting in this beautiful castle, where I had the honor to speak to the people of Ireland in 2016, let's resolve to march onward with each other and all those who seek a better future, because the vast majority of us do.

So let's renew our commitment to defending all the values we stand for. And let's remember—let's remember: No barrier is too thick nor too strong for Ireland or the United States of America, especially today.

There's nothing—and I mean this from the bottom of my heart—there's nothing our nations can't achieve if we do it together. I really mean it.

So thank you all. God bless you all. And let's go—let's go late—lick the world. Let's get it done. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:09 p.m. at Dublin Castle. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Christopher J. Dodd; Prime Minister Leo Varadkar of Ireland; Marie Heaney, wife of Irish poet Seamus Heaney; and former Secretary of State's Personal Representative for Northern Ireland and former Sen. Gary W. Hart. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens and brothers James B. and Francis W. Biden.

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